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THE OROMO: TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGY OF LIBERATION AND OROMO EMPOWERMENT

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Introduction - 1



✦ **THE CURRENT CRISES OF OROMO LEADERSHIP:**

- ✦ Sources of the crises: external and internal forces –
- ✦ (1) External forces -- the Tigrayan-led government and its global and regional supporters (several books and articles written);
- ✦ (2) Internal forces -- 1) Oromo collaborators; 2) the crisis of Oromo leadership; 3) the crisis of Oromo society (issues focused on);

Introduction - 2

✧ **ADDRESSING FOUR MAJOR ISSUES:**

- ✧ (1) Background; (2) Colonialism underdeveloped Oromo leadership; 3) Connections among (a) inferiority complex, (b) Knowledge for mental liberation, and (c) the development of a revolutionary consciousness; and
- ✧ (4) Ways of forging a united vibrant leadership;

Background-1

- ✦ **OUR LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT WHEN WE WERE FREE** – the *gadaa* republican system;
- ✦ (1) The rule of law; (2) strong defense force for national security; (3) the establishment of *Biyyaa Oromoo* (Oromia); (4) rigorous training of young people for leadership;
- ✦ (5) Sustenance and reinvention of leadership through the rule of law and democracy

Background-2



- ✧ Political platform: *caafee* or *gumii* assembly;
- ✧ Strong political and military leadership for defeating traitors and national enemies;
- ✧ The capitalist world system and internal divisions caused the colonization of the Oromo;
- ✧ The underdevelopment of Oromo leadership;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -1



- ✧ The destruction of Oromo leaders and institutions;
- ✧ Building foreign institutions in Oromia;
- ✧ Creating and perpetuating Oromo collaborative leaders who have been committed to satisfy their personal interests and the interests of their masters

Colonialism and Underdevelopment Leadership - 2

- ✧ The establishment of (1) colonial government, (2) the Orthodox Church, and (3) the colonial education to mislead and to miseducate the Oromo children;
- ✧ The establishment of (1) garrison towns and cities, (2) slavery, (3) the colonial landholding system, (4) the *nafxanya-gabbar* system, (5) the Oromo collaborative class; (5) the intensification of psychological war on the Oromo;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

3

- ✧ (1) The intensification of economic exploitation; (2) the mutilation of Oromo history, culture, and language;
- ✧ (1) Oromo-ness was targeted for destruction; (2) the Oromo identity was localized; (3) Oromos were separated from one another; (4) they were turned on one another; (5) prevented from having organizational and institutional forums;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✧ (1) The Oromo were exposed to other cultures and identities; (2) started to develop an inferiority complex; (3) began to change religions, identities, names, etc.;
- ✧ (1) Revolutionary nationalist elements emerged and challenged these trends in the 1960s and the 1970s; (2) several resistance and cultural groups also emerged to demonstrate Oromo interest and awareness;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✧ (1) The Oromo national movement has been confronted by the external and internal enemy enemies; (2) the Oromo struggle has failed to solve its internal problems; (3) an intermediary class has continued to serve its master;
- ✧ (1) Most Oromo collaborators have become tools; implemented terrorist and genocidal policies, and (2) have continued to attack and destroy the revolutionary leadership;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✧ (1) Today the Oromo collaborators are the numerical majority in the so-called Tigrayan parliament, administration, and the army; (2) they are participating in imprisoning and killing Oromo nationalists;
- ✧ (3) (Frantz Fanon); these intermediaries have brought violence to their own people; (4) they maintain Ethiopian colonialism in Oromia; (5) they wear **ETHIOPIAN MASKS;**

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✧ (1) These collaborators imitate their masters; (2) these “house niggers,” to use Malcolm X’s phrase, currently imitate their Tigrayan masters; (3) a few of them are “rewarded extravagantly with fame, fortune and celebrity status”;
- ✧ (4) Collaborators are less competent and less intelligent individuals; (5) They only promote their personal interests at the cost of the Oromo national interest;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✧ (1) The Oromo collaborative elites have internalized their masters' worldviews – the oppressor within; (2) they suffer from immense political ignorance and an inferiority complex;
- ✧ (1) Oppression and dehumanization have disconnected them from their society; (2) their understanding of their individual biographies and collective Oromo history is limited;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

10

- ✧ Oromo collaborators have damaged psyches;
- ✧ (1) The Amhara-Tigrayan colonizers were not satisfied by colonizing Oromia and its resources; (2) they have opened a war on Oromo psyches;
- ✧ (3) Consequently, millions of Oromos today carry the badge of shame and wear Ethiopian masks; (4) they more reflect Habasha culture and worldviews;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✧ Psychological wars on our psyches have created auto-oppressors or the oppressor within;
- ✧ (1) The Oromo collaborative elites feel inferior and do not manifest self-confidence; (2) most Oromo nationalist elites are also suffering from psychological problems and inferiority complex; (3) Passing through colonial institutions have serious consequences;

Colonialism and Underdevelopment of Leadership -

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- ✦ (1) Most Oromo elites did not yet equip themselves with liberation knowledge; they do not adequately know their history, culture, and worldview; (2) they have limited critical knowledge and political consciousness;
- ✦ They give lip service to the Oromo national struggle, and their contributions to the Oromo struggle is very limited;
- ✦ Since their psyches have been affected they usually focus on petty issues and self-promotion;

The Psychological Legacy of Ethiopian Colonialism - 1



- ✧ Ethiopian colonial education mis-educated Oromo elites and disoriented their understanding of reality;
- ✧ They have learned the culture and history of the colonialists without learning their own history and culture;
- ✧ Our oppressors have tried to control our minds and psychology; this has caused personal and collective damages;

The Psychological Legacy of Ethiopian Colonialism - 2




- ✧ Most founders of the MTSA and the OLF were mentally liberated; however, Oromo nationalist leaders and followers who have allowed the partition of the Oromo national movement today are not mentally liberated;
- ✧ (1) The usage of Oromo sub-identities and cliques demonstrate this reality; (2) lack of commitment to promote liberation knowledge for consciousness-raising is another.

The Psychological Legacy of Ethiopian Colonialism - 3


- ✧ Mental liberation requires (1) liberation knowledge, (2) overcoming inferiority complex, and (3) developing commitment for team and organizational work;
- ✧ (1) We still face psychological crises that are complicated by political ignorance; (2) hence, our political leaders and intellectuals have failed to build a united national movement;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -1




- ✧ (1) The Oromo are chained mentally, physically, socially, culturally, and politically in Oromia; (2) they live under political slavery;
- ✧ We are not willing to learn about all these problems;
- ✧ Conscious elements need to understand these complex problems, find solutions, and teach their people;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -2




- ✧ (1) We need to come to terms with ourselves by learning about our crises; (2) coming to terms with one's self requires developing political consciousness and achieving psychological liberation;
- ✧ Psychological liberation enables to fight against the external oppressor and the internalized oppressive values and worldviews;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -3




- ✧ At this moment, we know the impacts of the external oppressor, but we do not adequately know the oppressor within;
- ✧ (1) The institutionalization of the oppressor within and the enslavement of our mentality have prevented us from critically understanding and solving our political problems; (2) until now, our struggle is focused on the oppressor without;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -4




- ✧ Liberation requires a battle on two fronts: the oppressor without and the oppressor within;
- ✧ (1) Our enemies incapacitated us in two ways:
 - (a) by denying education to almost all the Oromo, (b) by denying those few educated critical education and knowledge for liberation;
- (2) our intellectuals and leaders are disconnected from their socio-cultural bonds; hence they are disorganized and disoriented;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -5




- ✦ (1) Most of our intellectuals and professionals lack liberation knowledge and critical consciousness; (2) they are conflict-ridden and fight among themselves;
- ✦ If they are politically conscious they turn their internalized anger, hostility, and violence against the oppressor without;
- ✦ Ethiopian colonialism has denied us “essential human needs and essential human powers” that are required to fully develop as free human beings;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -6




- ✧ (1) we have been disconnected from our cultural and social roots; (2) our self-hood has been attacked through colonial education, religion, and the media; our worldviews and perspectives have been distorted;
- ✧ Our self-reproduction in praxis has been stifled; our people have been denied the right to know and express themselves;
- ✧ Our people have been denied to learn and teach about themselves in Oromia;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -7




- ✧ (1) Our people have been denied to organize ourselves to fight for their rights; (2) our people live in darkness and political slavery; (3) they have been denied to develop their human possibilities;
- ✧ What about the Oromo in the Diaspora who are beyond Ethiopian political slavery?

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment-10



- ✧ (1) Because of the oppressor within us, we have failed to solve our political crises in the Diaspora; (2) we must overcome our political ignorance and inferiority complex to defeat the oppressor within;
- ✧ (3) our struggle must be intensified on three levels: (a) the level of personal biography, (b) community level, (c) institutional and organizational level;

Liberation Knowledge, Consciousness-building, & Politics of Empowerment -11



- ✧ The liberation of the mind = knowledge of liberation, political consciousness, and the power of self-definition;
- ✧ (1) Without the liberated and free mind, we cannot resist oppression on many levels; (2) we must reject the knowledge for domination; (3) revolution begins with the self, in the self; (4) every Oromo must fight for the liberation of self and the emancipation of the Oromo;

Discussion and Conclusion - 1



- ✧ Domination only continues through controlling the mental power of our people;
- ✧ Our enemies disrupt our consciousness building processes through: (1) killing leaders, (2) infiltrating our communities and organizations, (3) dividing and turn us on one another; (4) war and terrorism;

Discussion and Conclusion -2



- ✦ (5) Controlling our thinking process;
- ✦ (6) Limiting the expansion of Oromo consciousness and self-knowledge;
- ✦ (7) Preventing the restoration of our heritage, culture, history, and civilization;
- ✦ (8) Disseminating of lies or distorted information through the media, education, and religion;

Discussion and Conclusion -3



- ✧ (1) Every Oromo must know the correct Oromo history, culture, heritage, worldview, and civilization from antiquity to present; (2) if we do not know all these things we are mentally dead and anybody can implant any information in our minds; (3) knowledge is power and we must empower ourselves; (4) we must identify our achievements and celebrate them; (5) we must break the chains of mental slavery;

Discussion and Conclusion - 4



- ✧ (6) Mental liberation requires courage, hard work, discipline, and commitment; (7) it involves individuals, family, and community; (8) we must build our brains and communities; (9) stop waiting for leaders and organizations and educating and organizing ourselves; (10) we in the Diaspora should overcome our passivity, political ignorance, individualism, anarchism, fatalism, arrogance/inferiority complex, and community divisions;

Discussion and Conclusion - 5



- ✧ We must engage in community building and creating a united Oromo movement;
- ✧ Building ourselves from bottom-up, restoring *gadaa democracy*, and creating organizational federations to build a national and global *Gumii Oromia*;
- ✧ How can we achieve all these?